



# NEWS RELEASE

1303 SW First American Place, Suite 100, Topeka, KS 66604-4040  
Voice (785) 271-2701, FAX (785) 271-2708, WEB [www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –January 23, 2006  
Contact- Harold Alford (785) 271-2701

## ***USDA Rural Development To Host Value-Added and Renewable Energy Grant Information Meetings***

***More than \$19 million in competitive grant funds available***

**Topeka, KS** – USDA Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks announced today that the Agency will host four informational meetings covering the USDA's *Value-Added Producer Grant Program* and *Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency Program*. The presentations, which will explain the details of these two important programs, will be held in Dodge City, Salina, Iola, and Topeka.

USDA Rural Development has announced the availability of \$19.475 million in Fiscal Year 2006 competitive grant funds to support the development of renewable energy and value-added agricultural business ventures. The Agency's *Value-Added Producer Grant Program* is part of a comprehensive energy strategy announced by Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns in December 2005 to help farmers and ranchers mitigate the impact of high energy costs and develop long-term agricultural profitability solutions.

In announcing the upcoming public meetings, State Director Banks commented, "Value-added projects under this year's program will bring new opportunities for agricultural producers to develop alternative energy sources, as well as create additional value-added products that provide needed investment in our Kansas communities. These grant funds can provide valuable support in the areas of renewable energy and value-added development where the agricultural sector continues to be a leader in forging important new solutions."

Each workshop will consist of two sessions: Session #1 will discuss the *Value-Added Producer Grant Program*, Session #2 will cover the *Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency Program*. The four USDA Rural Development program information meetings will be held:

**Dodge City / February 7, 2006:** Session #1 – 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Session #2 – 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m., Conference Room, High Plains Journal, 1500 East Wyatt Earp. Registration will begin 30 minutes prior to each session.

**Salina / February 8, 2006:** Session #1 – 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Session #2 – 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m., 4-H Building, Saline County Livestock & Expo Center, 900 Greeley. Registration will begin 30 minutes prior to each session.

**Iola / February 9, 2006:** Session #1 – 12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m., Session #2 – 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., Lecture Hall, Administration Building, Allen County Community College, 1801 N. Cottonwood. Registration will begin 30 minutes prior to each session.

**Topeka / February 10, 2006:** Session #1 – 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Session #2 – 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m., Extension Meeting Room, Shawnee County Extension Office, 1740 SW Western. Registration will begin 30 minutes prior to each session.

(continued)

Under this year's *Value-Added Producer Grant Program*, the funding assistance that can be awarded to a producer in the form of a working capital grant has been doubled to \$300,000, and \$1.5 million is also being allocated to provide grants of \$25,000 or less to eligible producers. Again this year, priority consideration will be given to those applicants who have at least 51% of project costs dedicated to activities for a bioenergy project.

The *Value-Added Producer Grant Program* grants may also be used for planning activities, such as feasibility studies, marketing and business plans needed to establish a viable value-added marketing opportunity for an agricultural product, or to provide working capital for operating a value-added business venture, marketing value-added agricultural products and for farm-based renewable energy projects. Eligible applicants are independent producers, farmer and rancher cooperatives, agricultural producer groups, and majority-controlled producer-based business ventures.

Awards under the *Value-Added Producer Grant Program* will be made on a competitive basis, and applications must be received no later than March 31, 2006. Detailed information and program requirements and the application process can be found in the December 21st, 2005, publication of the Federal Register, on the Kansas USDA Rural Development website at [www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks) , or by calling the Agency in Topeka at 785-271-2744.

Details for grants, loans, and loan/grant combination applications under the *Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency Program* are expected to be announced soon. Applications should be in the process of being developed now to maximize the opportunity for funding. The program provides Kansas farmers, ranchers, and rural small businesses the opportunity to receive funding for the development of renewable energy systems and to undertake efficiency improvements; such assistance can help rural Kansan's address the impact of high energy costs. Additionally, the creation of new renewable energy systems and undertaking energy efficiency improvements can also provide additional economic development opportunities for Kansas.

*Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency Program* funds can be used for a wide range of renewable energy projects utilizing technologies including biomass, (including anaerobic digesters), wind, solar, geothermal and hydrogen derived from biomass or water using one of these sources. Efficiency projects can include a host of improvements to a facility, building, or process that reduces energy consumption. Some of the types of improvements can include but are not limited to; lighting enhancements, insulation, higher efficiency motors and pumps, more efficient windows, and process changes that consumes less energy.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs that support increasing economic opportunity and improving the quality of life of the State's rural residents. The Agency provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure in rural America. During Fiscal Year 2005, USDA Rural Development provided nearly \$235 million in direct funding for community and economic development projects across rural Kansas.

**USDA Rural Development – *Committed to the future of rural communities***

- end -